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## **SAMPLES OF CATECHISM REVISION**

TO PASTORS AND TEACHERS: —

The Catechism Committee of Synod is herewith submitting to you three samples, or patterns, of a Catechism revision and asks you to indicate your choice. They are designated as Form A, Form B, and Form C and cover the same ground, namely, from the Introduction to the end of the First Commandment.

This inquiry is to assist our committee in determining the general form that our advanced Catechism ought to have. We speak here of an advanced Catechism because Synod has resolved to publish also a shorter and simpler book, to be known as the elementary, or junior, Catechism. By the advanced Catechism we mean Schwan or its equivalent. The chief question before us is whether this book should remain substantially as it is or take on a somewhat different form.

We find a divergence of opinion, but do not know to what extent our pastors and teachers prefer the one or the other. Synod in Milwaukee, 1932, declared for a slight revision of Schwan. On the other hand, the Visitors' Conference at River Forest, 1936,\* passed a formal resolution asking Synod and its Catechism Committee to make the book more practical for the instruction of children and adults. Sentiment to this effect on the part of others has been reported to us. Hence we have been advised by the President of Synod

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\* Three out of four groups. Time did not permit in the fourth group.

to send out samples and ascertain the opinion of the brethren before deciding on, and completing, any given form. If a change is to be made, now is the time to make it.

A new form will no doubt mean a somewhat larger book. But a larger book does not mean a more elaborate course or an extension of the scope; it should mean merely greater value as a text-book, especially to the child.

You are not asked to criticize details, but only to say which of the three samples appeals to you most. If any of the forms is generally preferred, the Catechism Committee will use that form as its general pattern, and the whole Catechism will later be submitted to all pastors and teachers for detailed criticism. We desire to receive many replies. A postal card will do. Try to reply within a week or ten days.

*Suggested replies:—*

I prefer Form A, because .....

Form B, because .....

Form C, because .....

Any additional remarks are welcomed

Address all communications to

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(Form A)

**A SHORT EXPOSITION  
OF  
DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. What is a catechism?

A catechism is a book of instruction in the form of questions and answers.

2. Who wrote our Small Catechism?

Doctor Martin Luther wrote our Small Catechism in 1529. See "Life of Luther" in Appendix. Read also Luther's "Preface," pages 3—8.

3. What does Luther's Small Catechism contain?

Luther's Small Catechism contains the chief parts of Christian doctrine revealed to us in the Bible.

4. What are the chief parts of Christian doctrine?

1. The Ten Commandments
2. The Creed
3. The Lord's Prayer
4. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism
5. The Office of the Keys and Confession
6. The Sacrament of the Altar

5. What is the Bible, from which these chief parts are taken?

The Bible, or Holy Scripture, is the Word of God, given by inspiration of God the Holy Ghost, written by the prophets in the Old Testament and by the evangelists and apostles in the New Testament.

2 Pet. 1, 21. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

2 Tim. 3, 16. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

John 17, 17. Thy Word is truth.

John 10, 35. The Scripture cannot be broken.

6. What does "inspiration of God" mean?

"Inspiration of God" means that God moved the holy writers to write and that He put into their minds the very thoughts and words they were to write.

2 Pet. 1, 21. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

1 Cor. 2, 13. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.

7. For what purpose did God give us His Word?

God gave us His Word "to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" and to train us in holiness of life.

2 Tim. 3, 15—17. From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

John 5, 39. Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me.

Luke 11, 28. Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.

Ps. 119, 105. Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

## PART I

### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

8. What are the Ten Commandments?

The Ten Commandments are a summary of the Law of God wherein He tells us how we are to be, what we are to do and not to do.

Lev. 19, 2. Ye shall be holy; for I, the Lord, your God, am holy.

Ex. 34, 11. Observe thou that which I command thee.

Deut. 6, 6, 7. These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.

9. When and how did God give this Law?

When God created man, He wrote the Law in man's heart. Later he arranged the Law in Ten Commandments, wrote it on two tables of stone, and published it through Moses.

Rom. 2, 14, 15. When the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

*Bible History.* Ex. 19, 20. There are three kinds of laws in the Old Testament. The Moral Law tells all men their duty towards God and man. — The Ceremonial Law regulated the religious practises of the Jews in the Old Testament. — The Political Law was the Jewish state law.

10. What is the summary of the First Table of the Law?

"Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind." Matt. 22, 37.

11. What is the summary of the Second Table?

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Matt. 22, 37.

12. What, then, is the summary of all commandments?

The summary of all commandments is love.

Rom. 13, 10. Love is the fulfilment of the Law.

13. Whom does God mean when in the Ten Commandments

He says "Thou shalt"?

He means me and all others.

#### THE FIRST TABLE

##### The First Commandment

14. Which is the First Commandment?

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.

15. What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

16. What does the First Commandment forbid?

The First Commandment forbids us to have any other gods besides the one true God.

Matt. 4, 10. Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

Is. 42, 8. I am the Lord; that is My name; and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images.

17. Who is the only true God?

The only true God is the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; three distinct Persons in one divine Being.

Deut. 6, 4. Hear, O Israel: the Lord, our God, is one Lord.

Matt. 28, 19. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

B. H. Matt. 3, 16. 17. The Son stands in the Jordan and is baptized; the Father speaks from heaven; the Spirit descends like a dove.

18. When do we have other gods?

We have other gods —

1. When we regard and worship a creature as God;

Is. 42, 8. I am the Lord; that is My name; and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images.

Ps. 115, 3. 4. Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

B. H. Ex. 32. Israel worshiped the golden calf. — 1 Kings 18, 18—29. The people worshiped Baal. — 1 Sam. 5. The Philistines made Dagon their god.

2. When we fear, love, or trust in creatures as we should fear, love, and trust in God alone.

Matt. 10, 28. Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

Matt. 10, 37. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Prov. 3, 5. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding.

Jer. 17, 5. Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm and whose heart departeth from the Lord.

Mark 10, 24. Jesus answereth again and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

Phil. 3, 19. Whose god is their belly and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

Ps. 14, 1. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works.

John 5, 23. All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him.

B. H. Luke 16, 19. The rich man.—Matt. 19, 16. The rich young man.

19. What does the First Commandment require of us?

The First Commandment requires of us that we fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

20. What does it mean to fear God above all things?

To fear God above all things does not mean to be afraid of Him, but to stand in awe of Him as the highest Being, to honor Him with our pious lives, and to avoid what is displeasing to Him.

Ps. 33, 8. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

Gen. 17, 1. I am the almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.

Gen. 39, 9. How, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?

B. H. Dan. 3. The three men in the fiery furnace.

21. What does it mean to love God above all things?

To love God above all things means to regard Him as our best Friend and gladly devote our lives to His service.

Matt. 22, 37. Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.

Ps. 73, 25, 26. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My heart and my flesh faileth; but God is the Strength of my heart and my Portion forever.

B. H. Gen. 22. Abraham loved God more than he loved his son.

22. What does it mean to trust in God above all things?

To trust in God above all things means to rely upon Him for help in every need.

Ps. 118, 8. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.

B. H. Dan. 6. Daniel in the lions' den.

**A SHORT EXPOSITION  
OF  
DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM**

**INTRODUCTION**

When yet a child, you were baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. By this baptism God adopted you as His child and promised that He would some day take you into heaven.

Now it must be your chief concern in life that you remain a child of God, so that you may inherit this promised salvation. Therefore you certainly want to know more about your heavenly Father. You want to know who He is, what He has done for you, and how you should serve Him.

This little book, called the Small Catechism, will help you to learn these things.

1. What is a catechism?

A catechism is a book of instruction in the form of questions and answers.

2. Who wrote the Small Catechism?

The Small Catechism was written by Dr. Martin Luther.

3. Who is Dr. Martin Luther?

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany, November 10, 1483. He was brought up in the faith of the Catholic Church. Being seriously concerned about his soul's salvation, he entered a cloister and became a monk. However, he found no peace of conscience in the teachings and the practices of his Church. But from the Bible he learned that God freely forgives sins to all men for Jesus' sake and that this forgiveness was his by faith. As he continued to study the Scriptures, he found that many errors and abuses had crept into the Church of his day. So he began to teach and preach what he had learned from the Bible. Thus he became the Reformer of the Church, through whom God restored to us the pure teachings of His Word.

On October 31, 1517, Luther published 95 theses against the sale of indulgences; from 1522 to 1534 he translated the Bible into the German language; 1529 he published the Large and the Small Catechism. The Augsburg Confession, in which

the doctrines of the Lutheran Church are set forth, was publicly read before the Imperial Diet of Augsburg in 1530.

Luther died in Eisleben, February 18, 1546, to the end confessing the faith he had preached during his life.

4. What does the Small Catechism teach us?

The Small Catechism teaches in plain language and simple form the chief doctrines of our Christian faith.

5. Which are these?

I. The Ten Commandments, or the Law, in which God tells us what we should do and what we should not do.

II. The Creed, from which we learn what God has done, and is still doing, for us that we may be saved and get to heaven.

III. The Lord's Prayer, which teaches us how we may ask our heavenly Father for whatever we need for body and soul.

IV. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, in which we are reminded of the blessed covenant we made with our God in early infancy.

V. The Office of the Keys and Confession, where we learn that God has given to His Church the power to forgive our sins whenever we penitently confess them.

VI. The Sacrament of the Altar, which Christ has instituted to strengthen our faith.

6. From which book did Luther take the things he teaches in the Small Catechism?

Whatever Luther teaches in the Small Catechism he has taken from the Bible.

## THE BIBLE

7. What is the Bible?

The Bible, or Holy Scripture, is the Word of God, which was written by holy men of God.

1 Thess. 2, 13. When ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God.

2 Pet. 1, 21. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

8. Who were these holy men of God?

The holy men of God in the Old Testament were Moses and the prophets, in the New Testament the evangelists and



the apostles. These men were the writers, but God Himself is the Author, of the Bible.

9. How can God be the Author of what these men wrote?

God gave to these men His Holy Ghost, who moved them *when* to write; inspired them *what* to write, putting into their minds the ideas, thoughts, and truths they were to write; suggested to them *how* to write, controlling the very words in which to express the divine truths.

2 Sam. 23, 2. The Spirit of God spake by me, and His Word was in my tongue.

2 Pet. 1, 21. The holy men of God, etc.

2 Tim. 3, 16. All Scripture was given by inspiration of God.

1 Cor. 2, 13. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual [matching the words of the Spirit to the things, truths, of the Spirit].

B. S. On Pentecost the disciples spoke the wonderful works of God as the Spirit gave them utterance, Acts 2, 1—14.

10. In which language was the Bible first written?

The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew, the New Testament in the Greek language.

The German translation of the Bible by Dr. Martin Luther was first published in 1534, the Authorized English Version in 1611.

Since then the Bible has been translated into many languages, so that today millions of people can read the Word of God in a language they understand.

11. What does God want us to do with His Word?

God wants us 1) to read and learn His Word, 2) to ponder it in our hearts, 3) to keep it in our lives, 4) to make it known to others.

John 5, 39. Search the Scriptures.

Luke 11, 28. Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.

Josh. 1, 8. This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.

Deut. 6, 6, 7. These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children.

Mark 16, 15. Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

12. Of what benefit is such study of the Bible?

From the Bible we learn —

1) How we may obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in Jesus, our Savior;

2) How we as God's children may lead a pious life here on earth.

2 Tim. 3, 15—17. That from a child thou hast known, etc.

13. Can the Bible really do such great things for us?

The Bible is *sufficient* to make us wise unto salvation and to guide us in our way of life; we need no additional revelation. It is also *clear* enough for a child to understand its principal teachings. And because it is God's Word, it is absolutely *true*, and we can safely rely on all its statements and promises.

2 Tim. 3, 15. (See under 12.)

John 17, 17. Thy Word is truth.

14. Into what parts is the Bible divided?

The Bible is divided into two large parts: the Old Testament, which treats of the Savior who was promised, and the New Testament, which tells us of the Savior who has come.

Each Testament consists of a number of books, which are divided into chapters and verses. This arrangement helps us to find in the Bible the texts that are quoted in the Catechism.

15. By which names do we quote the books of the Bible?

(Here the names of the books of the Bible are to be given)

16. Of what does the Bible treat?

The Bible treats of God, of His works, and of His will toward us; that is, it tells us who the true God is whom we should worship, what He has done, is doing, and will do for us, and what He would have us believe and do.

(Here follows the doctrine of God, Questions 17—21)

## THE FIRST CHIEF PART

### GOD'S LAW, OR THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

22. Who gave the Ten Commandments?

God gave the Ten Commandments, because He is the Lord and Lawgiver of all men.

Ex. 20, 2. I am the Lord, thy God.

Jas. 4, 12. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.

23. How did God first make His Law known to man?

When God created man, He put the full knowledge of His Law into man's heart.

When man sinned, this knowledge was very much blurred, but not altogether forgotten. Hence all men by

nature have some knowledge of God's Law, according to which their conscience judges their deeds.

Rom. 2, 14. 15. The Gentiles, which have not the Law, etc.

24. When did God again reveal His Law?

That we might better learn to know His will, God, on Mount Sinai, wrote the Ten Commandments on two tables of stone and published them through Moses in the Bible.

B. S. The story of the giving of the Law we find recorded Ex. 19 and 20 and Deut. 10, 1—5.

25. What does God tell us in these commandments?

In the Ten Commandments God tells us how we are to be, what we are to do, and what not to do.

Lev. 19, 2. Ye shall be holy, etc.

Ex. 34, 11. Observe thou that which I command thee this day.

(See the Ten Commandments)

26. Which other laws did God publish through Moses?

God gave to the children of Israel also —

Political laws, which regulated their civil affairs and were binding upon them only as long as they were a nation;

Ceremonial laws, which regulated their religious practises and were shadows of the coming Savior. They are no longer binding on us Christians in the New Testament.

27. To whom are the Ten Commandments given?

The Ten Commandments are the Moral Law, and they are binding upon all men. The first word in each commandment, "thou," points to every man, woman, and child in the world. The second word, "shalt," shows that God demands strict obedience of all.

Gal. 3, 10. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.

28. What is a brief summary of the Law?

"Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Matt. 22, 37. 39.

29. How may we group the Ten Commandments according to their content?

On the First Table we place the first three commandments, which treat of the love and service we owe to our God.

On the Second Table we place the last seven commandments, which treat of the love and service we owe to our neighbor.

### THE FIRST TABLE

30. Of what does the First Table treat?

The First Table treats of the love and service we owe to our God.

31. What is the summary of the First Table?

Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.

### The First Commandment

32. Which is the First Commandment?

Thou shalt have no other, etc.

33. What does this mean?

We should fear, love, etc.

34. What does God require of us in this commandment?

God demands that we should have Him only as our God.

Ex. 20, 2. I am the Lord, thy God.

35. What does it mean to have Him as our God?

We must learn to know the true God from the Bible and worship Him according to His Word.

John 17, 5. This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent.

Matt. 4, 10. Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

36. Wherein does such true worship of God consist?

True worship of God does not consist in external ceremonies and lip-service, but in this that from the heart we fear, love, and trust in Him above all things.

Matt. 15, 8. This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

John 4, 24. God is a spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

37. What does it mean to fear God above all things?

To fear God does not mean to be afraid of Him, but it means to honor, respect, and reverence Him, to stand in awe of Him, to think highly of Him.

Because He is the Holy and Almighty One, we should fear Him above all things and not do anything that might displease Him.

Ps. 33, 8. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

Ps. 5, 4. Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with Thee.

Gen. 17, 1. I am the almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.

Prov. 8, 13. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.

Gen. 39, 9. How, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?

B. S. Because Abraham feared God, he would not disobey Him,

Gen. 22. The three men in the fiery furnace feared God more than the wrath of the king, Dan. 3.

38. What does it mean to love God above all things?

To love God means to long for Him, to desire to be with Him.

Because God is our best Friend, continually doing more good to us than any one else, we should love Him above all things and therefore gladly do whatever He may ask of us.

Ps. 73, 25, 26. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my heart and my Portion forever.

Matt. 22, 37. Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.

Ps. 146, 19. The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.

1 John 5, 3. This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.

B. S. The woman whose many sins were forgiven loved much and showed her love in serving the Master, Luke 7, 36—50.

39. What does it mean to trust in God above all things?

To trust in God means to rely upon Him, to feel sure that He can help us in every need of body and soul.

Because God is willing and able to help us in our greatest difficulties, we should trust in Him above all things. Therefore we should not worry or despair, but believe His promises and confidently wait for His help.

Prov. 3, 5. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. (Trust more in God than in yourself.)

Ps. 118, 8. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. (Trust more in God than in man.)

Ps. 37, 5. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He will bring it to pass.

Is. 41, 10. Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.

B. S. Daniel trusted in God to deliver him from the lions, Dan. 6. Christ teaches us to trust more in God than in Mammon, Matt. 6, 24—34.

40. When do we sin against this commandment?

We sin against this commandment —

1) When we have no god at all;

Ps. 14, 1. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt; they have done abominable works.

2) When we have other gods in place of the true God or beside Him; (See the First Commandment)

3) When we do not fear, love, and trust in Him above all things. (See explanation of First Commandment)

41. Are there other gods besides the Triune God?

There is but one who really and truly is God; but there are many idols which men regard as gods.

Is. 44, 6. I am the First and the Last, and beside Me there is no God.

Ps. 96, 5. All the gods of the nations are idols; but the Lord made the heavens.

42. What is an idol?

An idol is anything men worship in place of the Triune God. Such an idol may be a creature (the sun, fire, an animal); a graven image, figure, or picture (the golden calf, Ex. 32; the golden image, Dan. 3); a spiritual being which men imagine in their own minds (the Great Spirit of the Indians, the god of the Mohammedans, of the modern Jews, of the Unitarians). The worship of false gods, or idols, is called idolatry.

Ex. 20, 4, 5. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them; for I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God.

Ps. 115, 4. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

John 5, 23. All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, which hath sent Him.

43. How do even we Christians often transgress this commandment?

We transgress this commandment whenever we set our hearts on anything and fear, love, or trust in it as we should fear, love, and trust in God only.

Matt. 10, 28. Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

B. S. When Peter denied the Lord, he feared men more than God, Mark 14, 66—72.

Matt. 10, 37. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

B. S. When Eli restrained not his wicked sons, he showed that he loved them more than God, 1 Sam. 3, 11—14.

Phil. 3, 19. Whose god is their belly and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things.

B. S. The rich man made himself his god by living only for his own pleasure and enjoyment, Luke 16, 19.

Matt. 6, 24. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

B. S. The rich young man loved his possessions more than God, Matt. 19, 16—24.

Jer. 17, 5. Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm and whose heart departeth from the Lord.

B. S. The Philistines trusted in Goliath, and Goliath trusted in his strength; but David trusted in the Lord, 1 Sam. 17, 42—51.

Mark 10, 24. Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

B. S. The rich fool trusted in his worldly goods, Luke 12, 15—21.

NOTE. — The First Commandment is the most important of all commandments because here God claims our hearts for Himself. In no wise and at no time should our hearts depart from Him, but always we should fear, love, and trust in Him with all our heart.

All other commandments are included in the First, and unless we keep this one, we shall not be able to keep the others. For this reason Luther begins the explanation of each of the following commandments with the words "We should fear and love God."

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(Form C)

**EXPLANATION**  
**OF**  
**DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM**

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION**

**QUESTIONS IN GENERAL**

- 1. What will make man truly happy and blessed in time and eternity?**

The knowledge of God and himself, saving faith, a godly life, and a peaceful death.

This is life eternal that they might *know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ*, whom Thou hast sent. John 17, 3.

Let us *search and try our ways* and turn again to the Lord. Lam. 3, 40.

He that *believeth* and is baptized *shall be saved*. Mark 16, 16.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*, we should *live soberly, righteously, and godly* in this present world. Titus 1, 11, 12.

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant *depart in peace*. Luke 2, 29.

*Bible History*. Peter's confession, John 6, 68, 69. The Pharisee and the publican, Luke 18, 9—14. The rich man and poor Lazarus, Luke 16, 19—31.

- 2. Do you believe that God desires to make you happy and blessed?**

Yes, I believe that God will have *all* men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim. 2, 4.

- 3. Where do you find the knowledge of the truth?**

In the Bible and briefly also in the Catechism.

**THE BIBLE**

- 4. What is the Bible?**

The Bible is the written Word of God, also called the Scriptures, or Holy Writ.

The Bible does not contain everything that God ever spoke or did, but only what it pleased Him to have recorded for our knowledge, instruction, and salvation.

There are also *many other things* which Jesus did. John 21, 25.

But *these are written that ye might believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name. John 20, 31.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our *learning*. Rom. 15, 4.

NOTE. — Here the catechist may, at his discretion, go into a further study of the Book, or leave it for the Bible-study hour.



### 5. By whom was the Word of God written?

The Old Testament was written by Moses and the prophets, the New Testament by the evangelists and apostles.

They have *Moses and the prophets*; let them hear them. Luke 16, 29.

Ye are built upon the foundation of the *apostles and prophets*, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone. Eph. 2, 20.

### 6. Why is it certain that these men wrote God's Word?

God the Holy Ghost gave into their hearts and minds both the facts and the words. (Verbal inspiration.)

All Scripture is given by *inspiration of God*. 2 Tim. 3, 16.

The prophecy came *not* in old time *by the will of man*; but holy men of God spake *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. 2 Pet. 1, 21.

Which things also we speak, *not in the words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but *which the Holy Ghost teacheth*. 1 Cor. 2, 13.

### 7. Of what comfort is this to you?

I can be certain that the Bible contains no errors, but that every word is the eternal, unchangeable truth, on which I can rely in life and death.

God is not a man that He should *lie*, neither the son of man that He should *repent* [change His mind]. Hath He said, and *shall He not do it*? Or hath He spoken, and *shall He not make good*? — Num. 23, 19.

Thy Word is *truth*. John 17, 17.

The Word of the Lord *endureth forever*. 1 Pet. 1, 25.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but *My words shall not pass away*. Luke 21, 33.

The Scripture *cannot be broken*. John 10, 35.

### 8. What purpose does the Bible serve?

a. It makes known to us the truth about God and ourselves.

b. It creates and keeps in us a saving faith in Christ Jesus and thus brings us life and salvation.

c. It causes us to grow in understanding, holiness, and godly living.

a. Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But *God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit*; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 1 Cor. 2, 9, 10.

b. From a child [from childhood on] thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are *able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*. 2 Tim. 3, 15.

c. As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may *grow thereby*. 1 Pet. 2, 2.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be *perfect, thoroughly furnished* unto all good works. 2 Tim. 3, 16, 17.

Thy Word is a *lamp unto my feet* and a *light unto my path*. Ps. 119, 105.

**9. When do we derive such benefit from Scripture?**

If we truly regard and respect it as the Word of God, read, hear, and study it prayerfully, and “when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word” and keep it.

To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My Word. Is. 66, 2.

Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me. John 5, 39.

Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it. Luke 11, 28.

**10. What happens to those who reject or disbelieve God's Word?**

They will be lost; for God says: “Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee.” Hos. 4, 6.

**11. What does Holy Scripture teach?**

It teaches the Christian doctrine; namely, that man, a lost and condemned creature, is saved alone by the grace of God, through faith in Christ Jesus.

## THE CATECHISM

**12. How is Luther's Small Catechism related to the Bible?**

It is a small and simple book of instruction in the chief parts of the Christian doctrine revealed in the Bible.

The Catechism has been called “the layman's Bible”; it might also be called the beginner's Bible; for it teaches and explains in a simple way the first and most important parts of the Christian doctrine, those parts which every Christian must know in order to believe rightly, to lead a Christian life, and, when his last hour has come, to depart in peace.

**13. Which are the chief parts of the Christian doctrine?**

1) *The Ten Commandments* (Law), given us that we might know our sins and the holy will of God.

2) *The Creed* (Gospel), in which we confess what God has done, is doing, and will do, for us.

3) *The Lord's Prayer*, in which Jesus has taught us to speak to our heavenly Father and bring before Him all our needs and desires.

4) *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism*, through which we are born again by the water and the Spirit and made heirs of eternal life.

5) *The Office of the Keys and Confession*, in which we

learn of the power which Christ has given to His Church on earth to forgive or retain sins.

6) *The Sacrament of the Altar*, in which repentant and believing sinners receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and the strengthening of their faith.

NOTE.—Here the instructor may enter upon further facts concerning the Catechism: what else it contains, its full name, its author, why it was written, how it differs from the Large Catechism, year of publication, place among confessional writings, its need today, Luther's direction to the head of the family, why to be committed to memory, ways of using it, meditating upon it from memory, etc. The object should be to make the Catechism as dear and as useful to the child as possible.

## THE FIRST CHIEF PART

### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, OR THE LAW

#### 14. What are the Ten Commandments?

They are the holy will of God, or the Law, in which the Lord states how man is to be and how he is to act in thought, word, and deed. (Ex. 20, 1—17.)

He hath showed thee, O man, *what is good*. Micah 6, 8.

Ye shall be *holy*; for I, the Lord, your God, am holy. Lev. 19, 2.

Thou shalt do that which is *right and good in the sight of the Lord* that it may be well with thee. Deut. 6, 18.

These words which I command thee this day shall be *in thine heart*, and thou shalt *teach them diligently* unto thy children. Deut. 6, 6, 7.

#### 15. How did God give His Law?

At creation He wrote it in the heart of man.

After more than two thousand years, fifty days after the departure of Israel from Egypt, God gave His Law on Mount Sinai in the form of ten commandments, written on two tables of stone.

The Gentiles . . . show the work of the Law *written in their hearts*, their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another. Rom. 2, 15.

The Lord declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even *ten commandments*; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone. Deut. 4, 13.

B. H. The giving of the Law, Ex. 19 and 20.

#### 16. What three kinds of laws did God give on Mount Sinai?

a. *The Moral Law*, or the Law of the Ten Commandments, which is binding upon all men.

b. *The Ceremonial Law*, which pertained to public worship and religious ceremonies, many of which foreshadowed the coming of the Savior. This Law was meant only for the children of Israel in the Old Testament.

c. *The Political Law*, which pertained to the government of Israel as a nation.

17. What is the summary of the Ten Commandments?

a. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind." Matt. 22, 37. (Deut. 6, 5.)

b. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Matt. 22, 39. (Lev. 19, 18.)

On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets. Matt. 22, 40.

18. What, then, in a word, does God require?

He requires love.

Love is the fulfilling of the Law. Rom. 13, 10.

Now, the end [that is, the requirement] of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned. 1 Tim. 1, 5.

19. What does this mean?

It means that God wants our heart.

In every commandment God requires above everything else a heart that is right; for out of the heart come the thoughts, desires, words, and deeds.

My son, give Me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe My ways. Prov. 23, 26.

The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. 1 Sam. 16, 7.

This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. Matt. 15, 8.

Obedience which does not come out of a loving heart for God and the neighbor is disobedience and hypocrisy.

20. How are the commandments grouped according to content?

They are grouped into a First Table and a Second Table.

#### THE FIRST TABLE OF THE LAW

21. Which commandments belong to the First Table?

The first three.

22. Of what do they treat?

They treat of God, His name, and His Word.

23. What do these commandments require of us?

They require of us love to God.

Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. Matt. 22, 37.

NOTE.—Here the text-book or the teacher could take up the doctrine of God. But in view of the child's knowledge of Bible History and the deepening of that knowledge through the study of the commandments it is not imperative; neither do some writers consider it desirable at this point.

## The First Commandment

### OF GOD

*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*

What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

#### 24. What does the Giver of the commandments say of Himself?

He says: "I am the Lord, thy God." Ex. 20, 2.

#### 25. What is this to teach us?

It is to teach us that we *must* obey because He is the *Lord* and that we should *gladly* obey because He is *our God*, who gives us the commandments in love and for our great good.

There is one Lawgiver, who is able to *save* and to *destroy*. Jas. 4, 12.

I am the Lord, thy God, *which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*. Ex. 20, 2.

The Lord is *good to all*, and His tender mercies are *over all His works*. Ps. 145, 9.

Thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord *that it may be well with thee*. Deut. 6, 18.

#### 26. Who is the Lord, our God?

He is the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who has made me and all creatures, redeemed me and all sinners, and saves me and all believers in Christ.

#### 27. Which is God's First Commandment?

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

Thou shalt worship *the Lord, thy God*, and *Him only* shalt thou serve. Matt. 4, 10.

I am the Lord: that is My name (honor); and My glory will I not give to *another*, neither My praise to *graven images* [man-made forms of a god]. Is. 42, 8.

"That is: 'Thou shalt have and worship *Me alone* as thy God.'"

"Whatever you lack of good things, expect it of *Me* and look to *Me* for it, and whenever you suffer misfortune and distress, creep and cling to *Me*. I—yes, I—will give you enough and help you out of every need; only let not your heart cleave to, or rest in, any *other*." (Luther's Large Catechism.)

The living God . . . *giveth us richly* all things to enjoy. 1 Tim. 6, 17.

This commandment requires *true faith* and *confidence* of the heart which is directed to *the one true God* and clings to *Him alone*. (After the Large Catechism.)

#### 28. What is it to have a god?

"To have a god is nothing else than to *trust and believe him from the heart*." (Large Catechism.)

**29. In what does man often trust and believe instead of in the true God?**

**a. In money and possessions**

"Such a man also has a god, Mammon by name, on which he sets all his heart and which is also the *most common idol on earth*. He who has money and possessions feels secure and is joyful and undismayed, as though he were sitting in the midst of Paradise.

"On the other hand, he who has none doubts and is despondent, as though he knew of no God." (Large Catechism.)

For this ye know that no whoremonger nor unclean person nor *covetous man*, who is an *idolater*, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Eph. 5, 5.

Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Matt. 6, 24.

B. H. The rich young man, Matt. 19, 16. The foolish rich man, Luke 12, 16—21. The despair of covetous Judas, Matt. 27, 3—10.

**b. In himself and other persons**

"So, too, whoever trusts and boasts that he possesses great skill, prudence, power, favor, friendship, and honor has also a god, but not this true and only God. This appears again when you notice how presumptuous, secure, and proud people are because of such possessions and how despondent when they no longer exist or are withdrawn." (Large Catechism.)

Woe unto them that are *wise in their own eyes* and *prudent in their own sight!* Is. 5, 21.

Seest thou a man *wise in his own conceit*? There is more hope of a fool than of him. Prov. 26, 12.

God resisteth the *proud* and giveth grace to the humble. 1 Pet. 5, 5.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine *own understanding*. Prov. 3, 5.

Cursed be the man that *trusteth in man* and *maketh flesh his arm* [human beings his strength and help] and *whose heart departeth from the Lord*. Jer. 17, 5.

B. H. Proud Pharaoh, Ex. 5, 2. Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 3, 15. Goliath, 1 Sam. 17. Peter's overconfidence, Matt. 26, 31—35. The despair of Saul, 1 Sam. 28, 7 ff. and 31, 4.

"Besides, there is also an extreme idolatry that seeks in its own works help, consolation, and salvation." (Large Catechism.)

**c. In various supernatural powers and superstitions,  
in fortune-tellers and sorcerers**

"Here belong those also, as, for example, sorcerers and magicians, whose idolatry is most gross and who make a covenant with the devil in order that he may give them plenty of

money or help them in love affairs, preserve their cattle, restore to them lost possessions, etc." (Large Catechism.)

The superstitions and abominations spoken of in Deut. 18, 10—12.

B. H. Saul's trust in the witch of Endor, 1 Sam. 28. The Egyptian sorcerers, Ex. 7 and 8.

d. In the saints or in a supreme being which is not  
the Triune God

"Consider what in our blindness we have hitherto been practising under the Papacy, . . . where every one selected his own saint, worshiped him, and called for help to him in distress." (Large Catechism.)

Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not. Is. 63, 16. (Departed saints.)

Woman, what have I to do with thee? John 2, 4.

My glory will I not give to another. Is. 42, 8.

An angel refused the worship of John, Rev. 19, 10.

All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, which hath sent Him. John 5, 23. (Lodges, Jews, Unitarians, Modernists, etc.)

e. In idols or self-invented gods

"No people has ever been so reprobate as not to institute and observe some divine worship; every one has set up as his special god whatever he looked to for blessings, help, and comfort." (Large Catechism.)

They have made themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, *These be thy gods*, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. Ex. 32, 8.

Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. Ps. 115, 3, 4.

(All idolatry and worship of the heathen.)

30. How does trust and belief in other gods also show itself?

It shows itself also in a false fear and love as well as in all godlessness and unbelief.

*Fear not them which kill the body*, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Matt. 10, 28.

He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. Matt. 10, 37.

The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1 Tim. 6, 10.

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 John 2, 15.

They are the enemies of the Cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, *whose god is their belly*, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. Phil. 3, 18, 19. (Ungodliness.)

This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips; but *their heart is far from Me*. Matt. 15, 18. (Unbelief; hypocrisy.)

The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*. Ps. 14, 1. (Atheism; Communism.)

B. H. Aaron feared the people more than God, Ex. 32. The rich man's love of himself, Luke 16, 19 ff. Eli honored his sons above God, 1 Sam. 2, 29. The unbelieving scribes and Pharisees, Matt. 23.

### 31. What does the First Commandment require?

"We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things."

### 32. When do we fear God above all things?

When we truly honor Him as the Lord, our God, walk before Him in all honesty, and dread nothing more than to disobey His will and command.

I am the *Almighty God*; walk before Me, and be thou perfect. Gen. 17, 1.

Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see Him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord. Jer. 23, 24.

O Lord, Thou hast *searched me and known me*. Thou knowest my downsit-ting and mine uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether. Ps. 139, 1-4.

How, then, can I do this great wickedness and *sin against God*? Gen. 39, 9.

The fear of the Lord is to *hate evil*. Prov. 8, 13.

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that *fear Him*, and His righteousness unto children's children to such as *keep His covenant*, and to those that *remember His commandments to do them*. Ps. 103, 17, 18.

Let all the earth *fear the Lord*; let all the inhabitants of the world *stand in awe of Him*. Ps. 33, 8.

B. H. The men in the fiery furnace, Dan. 3. Daniel in the lions' den, Dan. 6. Abraham's obedience, Gen. 22.

### 33. When do we love God above all things?

When we realize that the Lord, our God, is our greatest Good, with all our heart yearn to be His own, and gladly and eagerly do His will.

O give thanks unto the Lord, for *He is good*; because His mercy endureth forever. Ps. 118, 1.

God so *loved the world* that He gave His only-begotten Son. John 3, 16.

Whom have I in heaven but *Thee*? And there is none upon earth that I desire *beside Thee*. Ps. 73, 25, 26.



This is the love of God, that we *keep His commandments*.  
1 John 5, 3.

*B. H.* Abraham loved God more than his son, Gen. 22. Great love of God was shown by Mary, Luke 10, 39. The love of the repentant woman, Luke 7, 36—50. Daniel loved the Lord, Dan. 6. The three men in the fiery furnace, Dan. 3.

**34. When do we trust in God above all things?**

When we rely on Him above everything else for all that we need and with all our heart believe that we shall receive it according to His will.

My help cometh from the *Lord*, which made heaven and earth.  
Ps. 121, 2.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? *Hope thou in God*. Ps. 42, 11.

It is better to *trust in the Lord* than to put confidence in man.  
Ps. 118, 8.

*B. H.* The trust of Abraham, Heb. 11, 19. Daniel, Dan. 6. The three men in the fiery furnace, Dan. 3. David's trust in God when he met Goliath, 1 Sam. 17.

**35. Why is it necessary to have, worship, and serve God?**

Because outside of Him there is no salvation. Those who do not know, do not believe, or depart again from, the Lord are eternally lost.

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